

PROTECTING OUR WATER

Implementing Watershed Protection Plans
in the West Lake Houston Basin

West Lake Houston Basin Implementation Project Continuity Plan

September 15, 2025



This document supports the implementation of Watershed Protection Plans for the West Fork San Jacinto River, Lake Creek, Cypress Creek, and Spring Creek watersheds of Harris, Waller, Montgomery, and Grimes counties, Texas.

Funding for this implementation project is provided through a federal Clean Water Act §319(h) grant to the Houston-Galveston Area Council, administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
A.	Purpose and Objectives of the Continuity Plan	1
B.	Background	1
2.	The Future of Implementation in the West Lake Houston Basin.....	2
A.	Coordination	2
B.	Identifying Funding Opportunities	3
C.	Efficacy Analyses of Best Management Practices.....	3
D.	Continued Outreach	4
I.	Maintaining Partnerships	4
II.	Stakeholder Identification and Contact.....	4
III.	Contact Tools	4
IV.	Other Public Outreach Opportunities	5

1. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONTINUITY PLAN

The purpose of this Continuity Plan is to facilitate involvement of basin area stakeholders in the continued implementation of watershed protection plans (WPPs) for the Lake Creek, West Fork San Jacinto River, Spring Creek, and Cypress Creek watersheds. The Continuity Plan defines how Houston-Galveston Area (H-GAC) project staff will provide opportunities for public participation, partner with stakeholders, and communicate with project partners and the public to promote implementation efforts.

B. BACKGROUND

The West Lake Houston basin area is comprised of watersheds for Lake Creek, West Fork San Jacinto River, Spring Creek, and Cypress Creek. The total drainage area covers approximately 1,250 square miles of Harris, Waller, Montgomery, and Grimes counties. Lake Creek, Spring Creek, and Cypress Creek each form a confluence with the West Fork of The San Jacinto River which drains into Lake Houston. Each watershed is comprised of classified segments, unclassified segment tributaries, and a network of natural and manmade drainage channels.

Land cover in the basin area varies (**Figure 1**). In the watershed area for the West Fork of the San Jacinto River, land is characterized by developed areas especially near the Interstate 45 corridor and around the city of Conroe. These developed areas are surrounded by forest. In the Lake Creek watershed, developed areas hemmed in by forest persist south of Lake Conroe, but give way to a mix of forest and pasture/grassland toward the western edge of Montgomery County and into Grimes County. The Spring Creek watershed is characterized by highly developed areas surrounding the Woodlands Township and stretching along the Interstate 45 corridor. West of State Highway 249, the Spring Creek watershed land cover is more of a mix of forest and pasture/grassland. The Cypress Creek watershed is the most heavily developed of all the watersheds as it overlaps with urban areas in north Harris County. West of State Highway 290, there is a sudden shift to rural land cover such as pasture/grassland and some cultivated cropland. Development is expected to expand as growing populations push north from the Houston area along the major transportation corridors. Smaller cities such as Cut and Shoot, Magnolia, Oak Ridge North, Panorama Village, Pinehurst, Prairie View, Porter Heights, Shenandoah, Stagecoach, Waller, Willis, and Woodloch intersect or are completely contained within the basin area. Larger cities that intersect or are contained within the basin area include Conroe, Houston, Humble, Spring, The Woodlands Township, and Tomball.

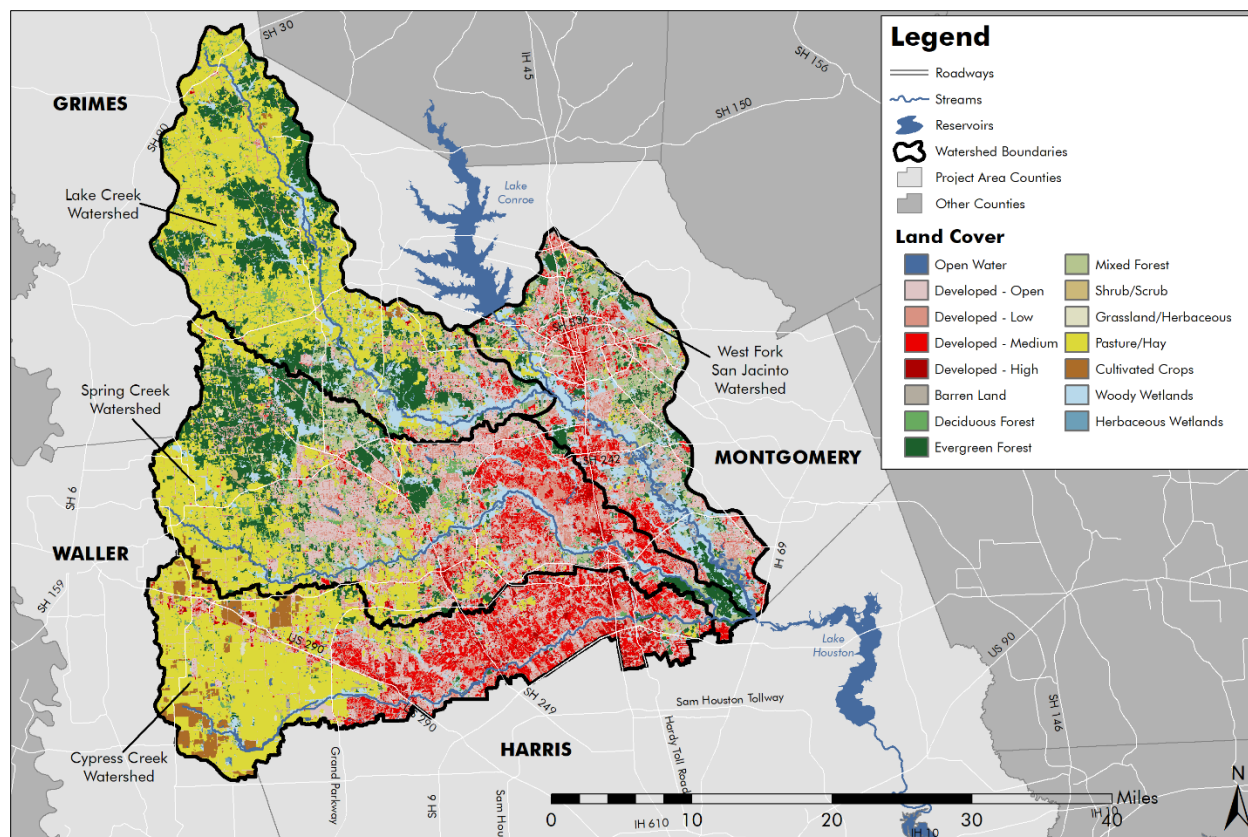


Figure 1 – Land Cover in the West Lake Houston Basin

Based on assessments of water quality summarized by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) in the 2024 *Texas Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality*, the primary water quality issues in the West Lake Houston basin are impairments due to elevated levels of fecal indicator bacteria, and concerns related to depressed dissolved oxygen, high concentrations of nutrients, and occasional issues with poor quality fish and macrobenthic communities and habitat. Other issues identified by stakeholders during preliminary conversations and as part of similar local efforts include sediment loading (from development), changes in flow velocity and volume, illegal dumping, trash, and bank erosion.

Given the wide variety of water quality issues and diverse land uses, an equally diverse set of stakeholder interests exists in the basin. There is strong existing support among active community groups, regional agencies, and local governments for addressing the water quality issues in the basin. Previous efforts by local governments, conservation organizations, and other project participants in urban and agricultural programs provide an existing network of interested parties. **This Continuity Plan is designed to outline a path forward for continued implementation of the WPPs developed for the Lake Creek, West Fork San Jacinto River, Spring Creek, and Cypress Creek watersheds.**

2. THE FUTURE OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE WEST LAKE HOUSTON BASIN

A. COORDINATION

Public involvement is an important aspect of implementing WPPs. It spreads knowledge about basin issues, develops engaged stakeholders, cultivates familiarity with the project, and helps support related partner efforts.

H-GAC will continue to provide opportunities for general participation by:

- Holding, or maintaining a staff presence at related events in the basin.
- Conducting direct outreach and education.
- Supporting partner efforts that involve the public.

Many stakeholder organizations are pursuing similar or complementary efforts in the West Lake Houston basin. These potential partners include local, regional, and state governments, community groups and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), agricultural agencies, *etc.* Many of the activities of these groups can have direct or indirect benefits for the aims of the project (e.g., local municipalities controlling pollution through stormwater permit activities). While these groups may also choose to participate directly in the project, it is also important to coordinate the efforts of the project with their pre-existing or planned activities. This may help share resources, increase efficiency, reach additional audiences, and achieve mutually beneficial ends.

In addition to the efforts aimed at general participants, H-GAC will promote participation of key partners through:

- Identifying all current or known planned activities that potentially overlap with the area of implementation.
- Maintaining one-to-one communication with key partners.
- Developing and coordinating roles for implementation.

B. IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Another key way H-GAC can continue to advocate for future implementation opportunities in the West Lake Houston basin is to identify and coordinate sources of funding for management measures. H-GAC will leverage its connections with other agencies and partners to either secure or help partners secure funding to support implementation priorities. Priorities identified by stakeholders during meetings of the West Lake Houston Basin Implementation Project included:

- Riparian restoration and enhancement,
- Assistance with on-site sewage facility remediation, and
- Assistance for wastewater treatment facilities for site improvements and enhanced testing.

C. EFFICACY ANALYSES OF BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

One action that stakeholders requested during public meetings of the West Lake Houston Implementation project that H-GAC could play a future role in is to develop a better understanding of the efficacy of pet waste stations in reducing bacteria loads. H-GAC is actively involved in an efficacy study regarding converting communities serviced by on-site sewage facilities to sanitary sewer. Lessons learned from this endeavor could be applied in future efforts to develop a project examining pet waste

station efficacy or efficacy related to other best management practices. More information on management measures could ultimately lead to more buy-in from local partners for continued implementation.

D. CONTINUED OUTREACH

I. MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

H-GAC will continue to work closely with area partners to prioritize implementation efforts in the West Lake Houston basin. Contacts include, but are not limited to:

- Harris County and associated precincts
- Waller County and associated precincts
- Grimes County and associated precincts
- Montgomery County and associated precincts
- Harris County Flood Control District
- Local governments
- Municipal utility districts and local neighborhood organizations
- US and State Forest Service
- Conservation Groups
- Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts

In addition to these key partners, H-GAC will also work with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) and other state and regional agencies to coordinate on implementation opportunities. H-GAC will continue to maintain a presence and represent the basin at local and regional groups including the Watershed Coordinators Roundtable, TSSWCB Watershed Coordinator Steering Committee, Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) Water and Sediment Quality Subcommittee, and other appropriate professional organizations.

II. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND CONTACT

H-GAC will continue compiling a stakeholder list from past WPP development efforts in each of the West Lake Houston basin's watersheds and participants in other related H-GAC and partner projects. Whenever possible, H-GAC will seek to expand our network through existing contacts.

III. CONTACT TOOLS

H-GAC will use a series of tools to provide active and passive outreach opportunities for area stakeholders and the public. To ensure a unified and coordinated message, H-GAC will seek to coordinate media releases across all platforms (e.g., concurrent messaging for a meeting would appear via email and on the website on the same day and have the same or similar content as a press release). To promote familiarity, consistent logos, design, and themes will be used as branding.

Distribution List

H-GAC will maintain a distribution list that includes all known contacts for the implementation area. The distribution list will, to the greatest degree practicable, include both emails and physical addresses. The list will be organized in such a way as to be able to index and query information effectively. The list will include, but not be limited to, elected officials and staff of local governments, local community organizations, local agricultural representatives, media contacts, state and regional government representatives, interested residents and landowners, local businesses and industry, and all other interested parties.

Email

H-GAC will use email as the primary means for communication. Physical mail will be used upon request, in absence of email contacts, or for certain official notifications to governments. H-GAC will use an email management system (Constant Contact or equivalent) to send messages in a professional format. All return email will be directed to the H-GAC project manager unless specific circumstances warrant other recipients.

Website

At a minimum, the project website will host all public documents, information about implementation, and contact information for H-GAC staff. The intended purpose of the website is to serve as a central repository for materials, accessible to all stakeholders, and as an outreach/notification tool.

Project Summary

H-GAC has developed, and will update, a brochure to use as a leave-behind for interested stakeholders and to disseminate to the public at events. The printed summary will be left with all stakeholders H-GAC meets with, and a digital version of the summary will be hosted on the website and other appropriate online venues.

Partner Outreach Tools

Whenever possible, H-GAC will seek to disseminate information through established partner communication tools and networks (community newsletters, bill inserts, etc.) H-GAC will request that partners disseminate H-GAC materials and will work with partners to produce content for partner publications.

Presence at Local Events

H-GAC will seek to participate in local events or meetings at which good exposure to interested stakeholders is expected. Examples include briefing local governments and maintaining a booth at local environmental events.

IV. OTHER PUBLIC OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

H-GAC will continue to coordinate with the public and area stakeholders on opportunities to expand their knowledge or become more engaged in basin efforts.

Texas Stream Team

Volunteer water quality monitors through Texas Stream Team are actively engaged in the health of their waterways. H-GAC maintains the Texas Stream Team program for this area which will seek to expand existing monitors.

Texas Watershed Stewards

Texas Watershed Stewards (TWS) is a science-based watershed education program designed to help residents identify and take action to address local water quality impairments. The program has been implemented through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife) and TSSWCB. TWS workshops are one-day, 4-hour events. The focus is public participation in local watershed management. The program is open to all basin residents, including homeowners, business owners, agricultural producers, decision makers, community leaders, and all other citizens. H-GAC will encourage AgriLife to continue to host TWS workshops in the basin to engage as many residents as possible in the watershed and empower them to make informed decisions.

Other Programs

H-GAC will work with AgriLife and other entities to evaluate the possibility of holding additional workshops in the basin. Topics of specific interest include established programs highlighting feral hogs, soil health, onsite sewage facilities, urban forestry, water quality aspects of flood mitigation, and riparian corridors. H-GAC will seek to coordinate on meetings specifically for agricultural producers to introduce them to programs and incentives available from TSSWCB, AgriLife, and USDA-NRCS or similar agencies.